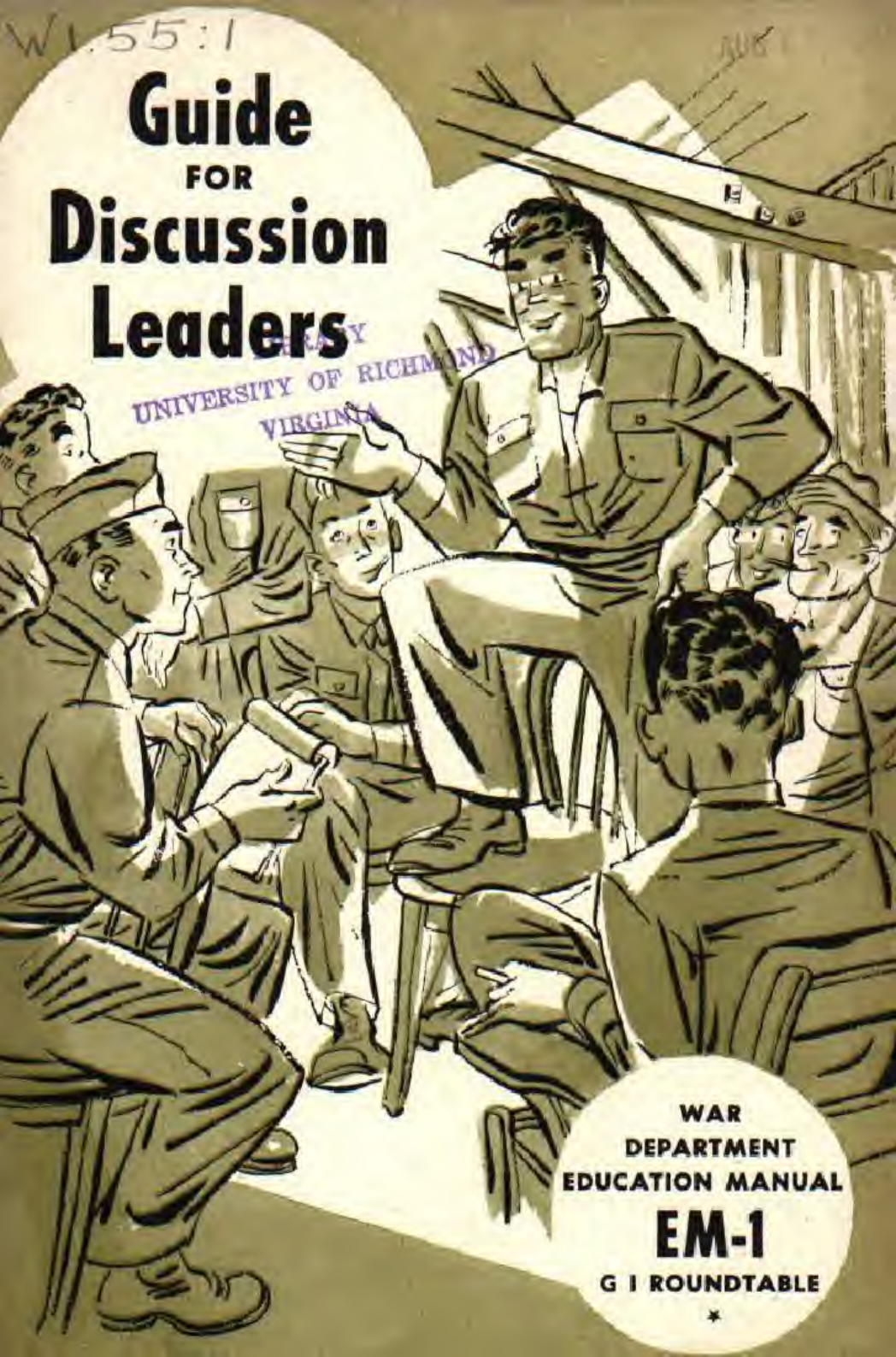


WV 55:1

Guide FOR Discussion Leaders

UNIVERSITY OF RICHMOND
VIRGINIA



WAR
DEPARTMENT
EDUCATION MANUAL

EM-1

G I ROUNDTABLE

*

BY THE AMERICAN HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION



This pamphlet is one of a series made available by the War Department under the series title *G. I. Roundtable*. As the general title indicates, *G. I. Roundtable* pamphlets provide material which orientation and education officers may use in conducting group discussions or forums as part of an off-duty education program.

The content of each pamphlet has been approved by the Historical Service Board of the American Historical Association.



WAR DEPARTMENT

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Guide for Discussion Leaders



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GUIDE FOR DISCUSSION LEADERS



I. Why discussion groups in the Army?

Ours is an Army of citizens trained in democratic ways. It is made up of men educated at public schools and universities, experienced in business and professional life, accustomed to reading newspapers and magazines and to drawing out books from public libraries. They have listened to radio commentators, attended and taken part in forums, signed petitions, and joined causes. They are American citizens who are used to asking questions and to holding opinions about everything that touches their lives.

Whether their opinions are well founded or not, they express them freely. To the extent that they do not have facts from which to draw conclusions, their opinions are likely to be unsound. If they lack facts, their morale may be weakened by uncertainty about the purposes and probable results of the combat for which they are so highly trained.

One of the most effective ways of making it possible for men to get at the facts and to prepare themselves for the problems that await them as citizens after the war is to make it possible for them to take part in informal discussion groups or forums. Such discussions afford a chance to check information and to compare and test out opinions.

This pamphlet tells how to organize discussion groups and forums that will serve this important educational purpose.

The objectives of a discussion program in the Army are:

1. To furnish information, not otherwise available to troops, on international, national, community, and personal problems.
2. To train men in democratic methods of studying and solving community, national, and international problems.
3. To offer men opportunity for orderly exchange and adjustment of individual opinions on public issues of contemporary importance.
4. To strengthen morale by assisting men to recognize, analyze, and understand problems that otherwise may trouble and confuse them.

Warning: It is important that all officers who are given or who assume responsibility for organizing or for leading Army discussions interpret the third objective with care. In phrasing this objective the emphasis has been placed deliberately upon *individual* opinions. It is desired that officially conducted off-duty discussions attempt neither to indoctrinate men with a particular point of view nor to lead them to any type of action such as passing resolutions, initiating petitions, or otherwise crystallizing a *group* opinion. The purpose of the meetings should be that of offering information and providing opportunity for study. The leader should meet his group with the attitude of an educator, not with that of a propagandist.

II. Stimulating interest

For some time discussion groups and forums of one type or another have been an active part of off-duty education in many Army camps and commands. The success and persistence of many of these groups make it obvious that this is a kind of activity in which many Army men are interested. Research studies within the Army have found personnel to be equally interested in discussing problems related to the war and problems related to the home front.

It is to be expected, however, that a relatively small proportion of any organization will show sustained interest in organized discussion as a phase of the off-duty educational program. For those who are interested, there is no better way of strengthening their understanding of the war and consequently their morale than by mental exercise on significant and worth-while questions. Their minds, in any case, will be inquiring and active. Thinking troublesome problems through will strengthen their good morale. That, in turn, is likely to become contagious and to have a good effect upon the morale of others who do not join in the discussion groups.

Any military personnel may want to join voluntary discussion: officers, warrant officers, enlisted men, WAC personnel, or nurses. Groups made up of all these classes of individuals have been successfully organized. The decision whether to limit attendance to one or more of these classes must be made in light of local conditions within the command. It is not impossible also that civilians who work and live at an Army post may want to join in organized discussion. In most instances, it is preferable for them to have their own group; but again in this matter the local situation will rule. Whatever decision is made to limit attendance should be taken with the purpose of creating favorable conditions for freedom and informality in discussion.

To organize a successful discussion group it is essential to determine, first, the questions that the men will want to discuss. The special interests of the men at the time of organizing the first meetings in particular must be taken into account. Remote and academic topics will misfire; topics of immediate concern to the men will enable the leader to reach his objective. (See Section III, Choosing subjects.)

An officer responsible for organizing a voluntary discussion group is advised to do more than announce that at 1930 on Thursday there will be a meeting of interested personnel to organize discussions of current and postwar issues. The leader or sponsor of the group should do some spade work first. The



FIRST DO SOME SPADE WORK

following devices will help him determine how many persons are interested and what subjects they would like to talk about.

1. **An interest questionnaire:** A short questionnaire can be quickly prepared and mimeographed. It should contain two types of questions. The first will inquire whether the men are interested in an opportunity to discuss under informed leaders subjects having to do with war and postwar problems; whether they would prefer to hear an expert give a short talk on the problem, to be followed by questions; or whether they would prefer simply to hear special lecturers. The second type of question will endeavor to discover interests in specific questions. Three ways of getting this information are suggested. One is to let the men make a free choice by writing the subjects they would choose on several blank lines following a statement like: "On the lines below write the subjects which you would like to discuss." A second way is to list a dozen or more subjects

CAMP X

Current Affairs Forum Questionnaire

It is proposed to organize a current affairs forum or discussion group for interested personnel to meet one evening a week. You can assist the officer in charge to plan a program of the greatest interest to the greatest number of men by checking the answers to the questions below:

1. Would you like to know more about current affairs?

yes ☐

no ☐

2. Which of the following methods of learning about current affairs would you prefer? Check one.

☐ Speech by an authority, followed by question period.

☐ Speech by an authority, without a question period.

☐ Informal discussion of current affairs under trained leaders.

3. Check below three subjects which you personally would be most interested to discuss or to hear discussed:

National Affairs:

☐ Plans for postwar employment

☐ Problems of small business

☐ Social security

☐ Universal military training

International Problems:

☐ Colonial policies

☐ Lend-lease

☐ Price of lasting peace

☐ Propaganda in wartime

Personal Affairs:

☐ Educational opportunities for soldiers

☐ Marriage in wartime

☐ Effect of working wives on postwar employment

Enemies:

☐ Germany

☐ Japan

☐ What about the War Criminals?

Allies:

☐ Russia

☐ China

☐ Britain and the British

☐ France

☐ Balkans

4. Suggest below subjects in which you are interested but which have not been mentioned under item No. 3:

.....
.....
.....

.....
(Name)

.....
(Grade and Organization)

FIGURE 1.

selected from among international, national, community, and personal problems. After each subject a blank is provided. The instruction accompanying the list should ask that from three to five choices be checked. A third way is to combine the two methods above. Below the check list the man may be asked to write on blank lines any subject in which he is interested, but which has not been included in the list. For a suggested questionnaire see Figure 1.



The leader (officer or enlisted man) preparing the questionnaire will decide whether he will get more authentic information from the men by having the questionnaires unsigned. The disadvantage of using unsigned questionnaires is that an opportunity is lost to secure the names of interested individuals.

2. Announcement: Once the plans for holding a meeting are made, interest may be stimulated or maintained by announcements in the camp newspaper, over the local broadcasting system, on slides during movie showings, or at formations. Such announcements are useful whether they deal with preliminary meetings to determine group interests or with information about the time, place, and subject of a specific discussion that has been decided upon.

3. Bulletin boards: An obvious way to stimulate interest in discussion groups — proposed or already functioning — is to maintain well-located bulletin boards. Posters, maps, newspaper clippings, and photographs should be effectively arranged. A clearly printed heading which gives the discussion subject can be used to tie the whole exhibit together.



Another bulletin board device is to make a list of intriguing questions which are bound to come up during the discussion. Arrange them under some such heading as "Do you ever wonder —?" and place a slogan below like "Come to — and get the answers."

Material on bulletin boards should be regularly changed. Bulletin boards on which exhibits are not constantly changed are of no value whatsoever.

You do not have to discard the idea of posters and maps because you cannot requisition them. Homemade ones—there's at least one fair artist in every outfit—are often more interest-provoking than professional productions. Every aggregation of men follows with interest the creations of its members.

4. **Movies:** Films shown in the Army often leave unanswered questions in the minds of the audience. The leader can capitalize upon these by timing the discussion of a particular issue immediately after the showing of a stimulating film. For example, "The Battle of Russia" in the "Why We Fight" series may stimulate a lively discussion on the postwar aspirations of the U.S.S.R.





**MOVIES OFTEN LEAVE UNANSWERED QUESTIONS
IN THE MINDS OF THE AUDIENCE . . .**

Similarly G. I. Movie releases often provide provocative discussion material; G. I. Movie Release No. 15 contains a section called "The Dutch Tradition," which may be used as a starting point for talking over what should be done about colonies in the postwar period.

5. Exhibits of books and periodicals: Librarians know how to arrange exhibits for the purpose of suggesting reading to the men. Similar exhibits related to a subject chosen for discussion may be arranged by the leader with the help of a librarian and can be set up in either library or service club. By suggesting preliminary reading, exhibits will not only stimulate interest in an announced discussion, but will also lead to more informed discussion on the part of group members who do some reading. The exhibits, tied in with discussion plans by means of an arresting poster or card, can be used either to promote the idea of group discussion or a particular meeting that has been an-

nounced. The advantages of library or service club exhibits of books and periodicals are two. These exhibits are seen by large numbers of men when their minds are relaxed and receptive. Second—and this is particularly true of library exhibits—they are seen by officers and men who have sufficient intellectual interest to search for reading materials. Among this type of personnel are found the individuals who will most desire to take part in discussion.

6. Organizing committees: Either before promoting a voluntary discussion group or very soon after the initial publicity, it may be an excellent plan under some circumstances to invite a half dozen officers and men to form an organizing committee. The purpose of having such a committee is to start the group off with the established policy of having members of the group determine their own program. More sustained interest in any voluntary activity is often secured if the participants have a share in deciding its methods and specific objectives. The suggestion for the inclusion of both officers and enlisted men is made because it has been found by experience that free discussion on a common ground by both adds greatly to the interest in the activity. Officers who join with enlisted men for this purpose must act as fellow inquirers if the full benefit of such a joint activity is to be attained.

Naturally care must be exercised in the selection of men invited to form the committee. It is preferable to invite those who may have already expressed interest in the program. It will assist the work of the committee if some of them have had experience on similar committees in professional, business, or community life. Each one should ideally have two characteristics. His intellectual interests should be such that he realizes the importance of a citizenry informed on public issues and that he understands the value of discussion as a method of study. His personality should be one that will enable him to sell the program to other men with whom he is associated.

7. Personal invitations: Usually it is possible to discover what individuals are likely to have special interest in forums and discussion groups. Interest questionnaires, if signed, will give one clue. Casual conversation may offer another. Members of such a committee as that described above should be able to supply names of other persons also. The officer or enlisted man who is organizing the program would do well to jot down any names he is able to secure in the course of his normal contacts with others. Both leader and committee members can stimulate interest in the meetings by issuing personal invitations to attend.

III. Choosing subjects

Choosing subjects for forums or discussion groups is a critical part of organizing the activity. No matter what method of selecting subjects is adopted, it should result in a choice which will hold the group together. The leader may have in mind specific subjects which he personally believes are important for the men to discuss. He should remember, however, that he is promoting a *voluntary* activity. He needs to find subjects upon which he can expect to make a successful start. Once the group is organized, he will have the opportunity of selling subjects for which the members—if approached “cold” during the development period—might express little enthusiasm.

One caution is to be observed in choosing subjects. No subject will lead to a valuable discussion unless the essential facts are available to the group. Limit, then, the choice of subjects either to those for which adequate reference materials are at hand, or to those for which some available expert can supply the facts at the meeting. Unless this caution is observed, discussion meetings are likely to fail in their purpose and may end in bickering that reacts unfavorably upon morale. It follows that trivial and highly personal subjects that may lead to a “gripe session” are to be studiously avoided.

1. Analysis of interest questionnaires: This is one important use of the questionnaire described earlier. In counting the votes for questions checked or listed by the men, it will be helpful to rearrange them in the order of preference as indicated by the number of votes received by each. The leader can thus get a rough idea of the general interest of his group. The specific subjects preferred will help him determine whether, in the main, the men are interested in current war or in post-war questions, whether they want to discuss subjects of military, international, national, community, or personal import. An analysis of this sort will be helpful also to a program committee. In using the analysis it is not necessary for the leader or his committee, if he has one, to choose those subjects which have the largest number of votes. The data from the questionnaire may be used rather as a guide to the range of interest they display. The choice of questions for discussion must take into account the availability of reference material for study, the presence in the command of suitable experts, the judgment of the leader and his committee, the policies of the commanding officer, the timeliness of the subjects suggested, and similar considerations.

2. Program committee: It has already been stressed that interest may be stimulated by using an organizing committee. If a committee is used, the best way to make it effective is to give it the specific job of planning the program. The members can examine the data secured by the leader from interest questionnaires and can add their own ideas about the preferences of men who are likely to attend the meetings. If the committee is called together early, it can assist in the preparation of the questionnaire. The committee can also determine what use shall be made of experts: what experts may be available: whether to plan small and informal discussion groups, larger forums, or panel discussions; when and where the meetings will be held: whether single meetings or a series

should be planned. If a series is settled upon, the committee can select a title for it like "Camp Blank Forum" or "G. I. Roundtable."

3. Phrasing the question: When a topic has been decided upon, it is important to phrase it as a discussable question. Such a question will draw attention sharply to a major issue associated with the topic. Most such questions should ask for a "yes" or a "no" answer. For example, assume that the subject for discussion is the type of economic and political system that may emerge in France after the war. A topical phrasing of this subject like "Postwar France" is relatively uninteresting and certainly indicates no discussable issue. The question, "Will the French Republic live again?" makes a better phrasing. It invites the marshaling of facts about French economy and politics around the affirmative and negative positions which may be taken with respect to the question. Sometimes a leader may be tempted to phrase his question so as merely to ask for information: "What sort of government for postwar France?" This type of question may occasionally appear appropriate, but it is never as strong a springboard from which to launch a discussion as a question that points the issue clearly.

IV. How to lead discussion

Group discussion can be organized in a number of different ways. The methods used in a given command will depend upon the local situation as judged by the individual who takes the lead in the planning. In one unit, small and informal discussion groups may be preferred, with little use of public speakers. In another, the popular American forum for a large audience may be desired.

Six common methods of discussion are described. It is recommended that the leader study in particular what is said about informal discussion. Even if one of the more formal dis-

cussion settings is chosen as suitable for use in a given command, many of the suggestions for conducting informal discussions will be found applicable to the panel, the forum, and the symposium methods.

1. Informal discussion group: Under thoughtful and effective leadership informal discussion is the best of all methods of attaining the objectives outlined in Section I. This is true because the small and informal group encourages participation by every member. Maximum learning of facts and exchange of viewpoints is possible. Morale is built up in each individual who feels he has had a direct share in the proceedings. Furthermore, the best way to learn is by doing. If, therefore, one of the goals of discussion is training in exploring facts and opinions related to important public issues, informal discussion groups will provide this training for a much larger proportion of group members than the more formal methods suitable when attendance is large.

Informal discussion groups may profitably be limited in size. Give and take of question and opinion between all members normally will not be attained in a meeting of much more than twenty or twenty-five persons. Fifteen or sixteen is an ideal size, though only six or eight are needed for a lively discussion. In order to attain a desired size, it is often practical to organize two or more groups which meet at different times or places. At a large camp where distances are great it is a good idea to hold several meetings at various locations which will enable personnel to attend without having to walk long distances.

A good leader can make big contributions to the success of informal discussion. If he is tactful and friendly in personality, he will probably be able to draw out the best in the men who make up the group. It is a very helpful thing in a lively discussion to have a tolerant leader who accepts a participant's opinion as something to be considered thoughtfully instead of jumping in at once to refute a view that disagrees with his own.

The leader should be able to think quickly and to express himself clearly and with economy of words and time. If he has a good sense of humor, he will be able to ease tension from time to time by joking remarks. The better he likes his job and the deeper his interest in the subject under discussion, the more successful the whole affair is likely to be. That of course does not mean that he should adopt an air of artificial heartiness, but rather that he should have a genuine friendly interest in his group and its problems. Such a leader will want to feel confident of himself in handling the particular discussion technique that is used, and he will want to be as familiar as possible with the subject that is chosen for study.

These may seem very high qualifications, but it is a rare command that will not produce many men who can meet them. Moreover, it should not be forgotten that skill develops by practice. Sometimes men can be found who already have had practice in leading group discussions. Others will find that their skill will increase as the discussion groups continue. And, as will be shown later, even a leader without experience can do a good job if he takes the trouble to prepare carefully for his meetings.

a. Relation of the leader to the group: The relationship of a discussion leader to his group differs from the conventional idea of military leadership. Unlike a commander, a discussion leader does not lead by example or attempt to inspire confidence in himself as an expert. He must not be a propagandist. On the contrary, he must himself be an inquirer. He wins confidence in his leadership by his acquaintance with the background of the discussion and by proposing a way to the next step in the discussion. He does not *take* the next step and expect the other members to follow. He is in essence a good teacher rather than an academic lecturer.

The skillful leader opens the discussion with a brief statement of the question and the salient facts related to it. This takes perhaps five minutes. Then he starts the discussion with a

pointed question. He keeps the discussion alive, if it falters, by summarizing points made or issues considered and by asking a question that redirects the talk. At the end he summarizes all major points that have been considered, without attempting to state the "sense of the meeting."

This last point is important. The leader must avoid the temptation to clinch the discussion with some stated conclusion. He must remember that one of his chief duties is to leave all conclusions to the individual.

The success of a discussion depends upon the thoughtfulness, breadth, and openmindedness of the talk that takes place—not upon such tangible results as conclusions reached. If an enlisted person is selected as leader, it is wise whenever possible to have an officer present at the meeting. Since off-duty education is a function of command, a representative of the commander should see that the objectives of discussion are attained as outlined here.

The leader, of course, need not feel that he should never state his own opinion. There are many occasions when he can do so in a manner that will not jeopardize his standing as chairman of the group. He expresses his own opinions as the others do when the opportunity occurs, but he is usually more successful in his leadership as he reduces the amount of discussion time which he personally uses.

Many leaders assign the opening statement or final summary or both of them to members of the group—a device which is particularly useful when some group members are even better

DON'T LET 'EM



GO TO SLEEP

informed on the subject than is the leader. This is an illustration of how the leader can both simplify his job and get valuable educational results by delegating certain tasks to others. As a further example, at one meeting the leader might ask one individual to give the introductory statement of facts and request a second to take minutes and make the summary which closes the meeting. In this case the leader would be responsible for the opening question and for guiding the course of the discussion with necessary questions and interim summaries.

b. Preparation by the leader: The leader must prepare for each meeting thoroughly. This is far more important than that he be facile in the conduct of the actual meeting. By careful preparation a leader can do much toward assuring an interesting meeting even if he is not an experienced chairman. The necessary preparations can be briefly stated, but they require time and thought.

(1) The leader must, if possible, learn in advance the interests and points of view of the individuals in his group. If he can talk informally with them before the meeting, he can learn the general point of view of each and at the same time help

**PREPARE YOURSELF
THOROUGHLY**



each to become acquainted with him. This will tend to break down any stiffness which may be natural in the first meeting of the group.

(2) The leader must familiarize himself with the subject for discussion to the extent necessary for intelligent leadership. This does not mean that he is obliged to make himself an expert on any subject that may come into his program. To do so would be pretty obviously impossible. But he must know enough about the important issues to enable him to keep the train of talk on the track and moving forward. Like a good instructor he must not hesitate to admit lack of information. When a question arises, his normal procedure in any case is to direct it to some group member for answer. If no one sufficiently informed is present, he can with a feeling of perfect assurance suggest a source from which the missing facts may be secured.

(3) The leader should prepare an outline of the course of the discussion as he foresees it. He will, either as part of his outline or separately, prepare a list of questions which may or should be asked. He must not, however, permit his prepared



LET 'EM SMOKE
BUT KEEP THE ROOM
VENTILATED

outline to become a strait jacket for the discussion. The actual discussion can be expected to follow a different course from the one planned in advance, but an outline will assist the leader in his personal preparation. It will also help him to distinguish between major issues, which should be developed when they arise, and minor or unrelated issues, which should be quickly passed over.

(4) The leader must decide in advance whether he will use assistant leaders, and must see that they too are prepared.

(5) The leader must decide whether he will use such aids to presenting his basic facts as a blackboard, charts, diagrams, or other visual aids. He must have any such desired materials ready for use.

c. Conduct of the meeting: In describing the duties of the leader much has already been stated or implied about the conduct of the meetings. Here is a summary of a number of additional details which the leader must have in mind:

(1) Physical surroundings should be as comfortable and informal as possible. Whether the group is seated outdoors or in a library, day room, service club, or tent, the members should arrange themselves so as to be able to see each other. Smoking should be permitted. If the meeting is held indoors, the leader should be careful that the room is properly ventilated.

(2) The length of the meeting should be rigidly limited. An hour is about the right time. It is better to close a meeting while the interest in the subject is high than to risk boredom by allowing it to continue overtime in order to attain some aim or conclusion preconceived by the leader. Many of the best radio forums close in the very middle of lively discussions. It is not necessary to exhaust the subject—and the audience.

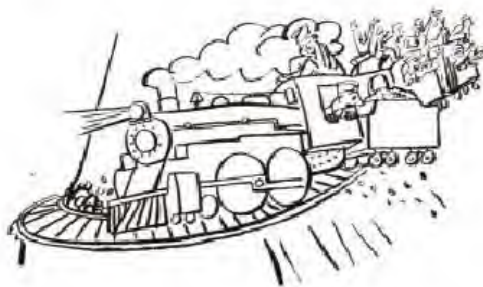
(3) To a newly organized group the leader should announce briefly the procedure to be used; that personalities are not to be discussed and that comments or questions must bear on the subject or be disallowed.



CLASSIFY TYPES



(4) Stimulating and guiding the discussion is the most important job of the leader during the actual meeting. He should guide almost entirely by asking questions, by briefly citing a specific case followed by a question, or by summarizing. His questions should ask for reasons and causes (why?), for facts (what?), for circumstances under which certain things may be true (when?), for expressions of opinion (what do you think?), and for common ground upon which some agreement may be reached. The leader should avoid rhetorical questions and any question so obvious that it can be answered simply by "yes" or "no." These usually block discussion.



KEEP ON
THE TRACK

Very occasionally a question requiring "yes" or "no" for an answer, however, can be used effectively. A leader for example will state briefly a definite position that can be taken with respect to an issue. He will then ask a member whom he points out: "Do you agree with that or don't you?" The member's



HANDLE THEM SKILLFULLY



“yes” or “no” under the right circumstances will start a lot of protests on the part of those who disagree with him, and the discussion is off to a new start.

Skillful leaders will ask questions only when necessary. Many good questions will come from the group. They should be encouraged by friendly comment: “That is a good question. Who can answer it?” The leader usually needs only to start, to change the direction of the discussion, to bring the members back when they wander too far, and to bring out different points of view.

(5) Both controlling and encouraging participation by all members requires understanding and tact. The talkative member should be allowed only his share of the time, and then should be thanked for his statement and reminded that everyone must have his opportunity to speak. The silent member can be encouraged to speak if the leader will ask him a direct question about which he is known to possess information or to hold an opinion. The opinionated member must be led to understand that positions different from his are reasonable and that thoughtful persons do change their opinions. When the anecdotal member launches forth into his personal experience at great length, he must be handled as the talkative member. The impatient member is looking for a quick, cure-all solution and is perhaps too lazy to think a problem through. He needs to be told that the process of discussion consists, not of giving, but of carefully searching for conclusions upon which each individual usually must decide for himself.

(6) When the discussion wanders too far from the subject



or when it gives signs of flagging, it is a good thing to summarize the chief points made up to that moment. The discussion can then be redirected by another question from the leader.

(7) Announce the subject, time, place, and special speaker (if any) of the next meeting in a series. If a subject for the next meeting has not been decided upon, take the last minute or two to secure suggestions from the group. Find out if the group would like to continue discussing some issue that has been raised, but has not been explored thoroughly during the meeting. Or ask for a show of hands on two or three other subjects which may be interesting to the members.

2. Panel discussion: A panel consists of a small group of six or eight persons, who carry on a guided and informal discussion before an audience as if the panel were meeting alone. The proceedings of the panel should be the same as those described for informal discussion: volunteering of facts, asking questions, stating opinions—all expressed with geniality, with respect for the contributions of other members, without speech making, and without making invidious personal references. This primary function should occupy approximately two-thirds of the allotted time—say forty minutes of an hour's meeting. The secondary function of the panel is to answer questions from the audience.

This discussion method is suitable for use when a relatively

large audience is anticipated. The disadvantage of the method is that it confines most of the discussion to the panel itself. The audience listens and is given a chance to ask questions, but for the most part is passive and receptive.

Panel discussions, if well conducted, are usually more interesting to the audience than is the single-speaker forum. They provide sufficiently varied clash of opinion and presentation of facts to give even the quiet members of the audience a feeling of vicarious participation.

Quality and tasks of leadership in panel discussion are similar to those described for informal discussion. The leader must in addition take special care to select panel members who can think and speak effectively. He must also be sure that they prepare themselves to discuss the subject. During the discussion by the panel the leader has substantially the same duties as in informal discussion except that he should keep himself more in the background as chairman of the panel. He can do so because each member of the panel is in reality an assistant to the leader and is responsible for specific contributions to the proceedings.

When the subject is thrown open to the house, it is the leader's job to recognize appropriate questions and to reject those not bearing on the subject or involving personalities. Some questions he may answer himself, but usually he should repeat the question and call upon one of the panel to answer it. By preliminary announcement the leader may also tell the audience that they may direct questions at particular members of the panel if they choose. In any case, during the question period the leader needs to maintain strict control. On many occasions this may be the toughest part of his assignment to carry off efficiently and with good humor.

While it is customary to confine audience questions to a specific period, some leaders permit questions from the floor at any time. Unless very carefully limited by the leader, this practice may interfere with effective discussion by the panel.

Arranging the panel properly will lend effectiveness to this

SINGLE-SPEAKER
FORUM



form of discussion. The members should face the audience. One possible arrangement is illustrated on page 22. It is important that each panel member adjust his chair so that he can see every other member without effort. The chairman will also find that the best places for his readiest speakers are at the extreme ends of the table. He should keep the more reticent members close to him so that he can readily draw them out with direct questions. If the quieter ones sit on the fringes of the panel, the more voluble members are quite likely to monopolize the discussion.

3. Single-speaker forum: This is a good type of presentation when an individual who is an "expert" and a strong public speaker can be secured for the meeting. If a series of such forums are to be planned, it will be necessary in all probability to call upon a different speaker for each occasion. Sometimes it may be possible to invite such speakers from nearby universities or professional and other local associations. Often competent specialists may be found among the officers and men of the command.

The single-speaker forum has the disadvantage of presenting for consideration only one point of view—that of the speaker. An occasional speaker may try to explain various positions that may be taken on the basis of the known facts which he outlines. It is nevertheless difficult for him, in spite of the most conscien-

tious effort, to avoid stressing his own point of view more than others. If the audience or any sizable fraction of it fails to agree with him, what follows the speech is apt to be a battle of wits. Such a battle may try the skill and good humor of both the speaker and the leader-chairman.

A second disadvantage of the single-speaker forum is that the meeting is based on a lecture. Men hear so many of these that only the best of them get across. This is not to say that the single-speaker forum is a poor method. With the right speaker and under a competent chairman, it can be highly stimulating to the thinking of the audience.

The functions of the leader or moderator of a forum consist of the following:

- (1) To prepare himself in advance on the subject.

- (2) To inform the audience about forum procedure—how long the speaker will talk, when the audience may ask questions, what kinds of questions will be recognized by the moderator, and how long the question period will last. (An address of twenty to thirty minutes and a question period of about twenty minutes are recommended.)

- (3) To introduce the speaker, explaining why he has been invited to speak and stating the question which he will discuss. (It is important to tell the audience what point of view toward the question is represented by the speaker.)

- (4) To assure good questioning from the floor. (Three or four individuals may be planted with specific questions in the audience. Or signed, written questions may be solicited in advance. The first suggestion fits naturally into the question period; the second is likely to make the forum cut-and-dried, though it is sometimes useful.)

- (5) To recognize questioners in parliamentary fashion and to restate suitable questions for the speaker. (Acceptable questions ask for additional facts, for an elaboration or explanation of some statement already made, or for an expression of opinion.)

(6) To train the audience to stick to the point and to be tolerant of opinions contrary to their own.

Two types of audience members are likely to require special handling by the moderator. The man who tries to make a speech in the guise of a question may be stopped by a request to rephrase his question briefly. The man who merely paraphrases what the speaker has already said for the sake of hearing himself talk should be interrupted with a remark that his statement has been covered by the speaker. In general the moderator will have to help the audience understand its part by recognizing relevant questions and praising unusually good ones.

4. Dialogue: The dialogue is a kind of informal lecture-forum. Its procedure is similar to that of the forum except that the leader or moderator acts as an interlocutor. He prepares as carefully as does the chief speaker. To start the discussion he asks the expert a direct question. When he has received a reply, he may give some interpretation or comment of his own and follow with another question. Thus he guides the speaker from issue to issue until the subject has been as fully presented as the time allows. Audience questioning of either member of the dialogue follows.

Because the moderator has the opportunity of guiding the expert and because he may stress a position that differs from the latter's, the dialogue need not have the disadvantage of presenting only one point of view. In the hands of a skillful inter-

DIALOGUE



locutor it possesses for a large audience advantages similar to those of a panel discussion.

5. Symposium: This is still another type of forum. By providing two or three speakers, each charged with the duty of presenting a different point of view, the symposium consciously attempts to direct audience attention to various approaches toward the problem under consideration. In this it leaves less to chance than does the informal discussion or the panel discussion. It is to be preferred to the single-speaker forum unless the single expert can make a brilliant presentation. Naturally its success will also depend upon the competence of the symposium members.

A possible disadvantage of the symposium is inherent in dividing the lecture time between two or three individuals. No one of them can give anything but a cursory treatment of his phase of the subject. Thus the symposium may lose in depth while it gains in comprehensiveness. This tendency to lack detailed treatment may be balanced by spreading the symposium over several meetings, all dealing with the same general subject.

Participation by the audience is usually more limited in the symposium than it is in the single-speaker forum or dialogue, but the general technique, i. e., the duties of the moderator, the speakers, and the audience, are the same as in the single-speaker forum.

6. Debate: Unless debate is used to stimulate a discussion



that follows the formal speeches, it will not be a constructive activity for the educational program. Debate, however, is attractive to Americans for two reasons. Most of us have listened to debates and many of us have taken part in them at school or college: so the setting is familiar. The competitive feature of debate appeals to American audiences. But the combative atmosphere of debate denies the basic principles of discussion. These imply an impartial examination of the facts and an attempt to reach a solution acceptable from a number of viewpoints. If debate is used, the only way to meet this dilemma is to throw the subject open for discussion by the audience with the debaters acting as the experts.

There are other disadvantages to the debate form. Debate implies that there are only two sides—affirmative and negative—to the question, while numerous public issues are many-sided. Furthermore, all members of each team must support one side or the other of the proposition regardless of whether they agree fully with it. To this extent debate is forced, artificial, and rigid.

The subject for debate must be so phrased that one side will categorically uphold it (the Affirmative), and the other will oppose it (the Negative). Normally each team will have two or three members. The debate begins with the first speaker for the Affirmative. The main speeches alternate from Affirmative to Negative until the last speaker for the Negative has finished. In preparing their main speeches the team members divide between them the statements of fact and issues which they wish to make. After the main speeches the rebuttal speeches begin. The first of these is made by a speaker for the Negative followed by an Affirmative rebuttal, and so on. In the rebuttal speeches each member tries to disprove or raise objections to points made by the opposing team. For this purpose each side has made notes of arguments or facts advanced by their opponents.

In debating it is customary for specially appointed judges or the audience to vote either on the merits of the question or on

the effectiveness of the presentations. Then everybody goes home, having viewed a purely academic exercise. To make debates useful in the Army educational program a question period by the audience should replace the voting. The questioning should be controlled by the chairman of the debate, using the methods already referred to in this pamphlet.

If the debate is to be at all effective, the debaters must be competent speakers, must be able to think quickly on their feet, and must be acquainted with the formalities of the debate method. They must either be experts in the subject or make themselves such by study. Each team must do a good deal of joint preparation of speeches and study of arguments that may be advanced by their opponents.

In conclusion it may be said that the debate is in general not well adapted to the attainment of the objectives given in Section I. The spirit of discussion in the Army is intended to be one in which the chief purposes are seeking information and exploring a variety of opinions. Since any definite action like the passing of resolutions is not desired on the part of men, partisan advocacy of a given opinion—an integral part of debate—does not easily fit the Army program.

7. Question box: The question box may be used as an aid to stimulate an audience which it is feared may not volunteer questions from the floor. It can be used with any of the forms of discussion attended by a question period.

The mechanics of the question box are simple. All that is necessary is a strategically located and well-advertised box. In it interested persons may place questions in advance of the meeting. If the questions are to be written out and collected during a meeting, the audience should be supplied with slips of paper or small cards. Enough pencils should be on hand to help men who do not carry one.

The question box is a device which may assist the leader to control the questioning very rigidly, because he can select for

answer in advance only those questions he deems suitable. The disadvantage of this use is that it reduces audience participation almost to nothing, with an attendant drop in interest. It is recommended only for use at large meetings when for some reason it is desirable to limit the range of questions or when it is believed that spontaneous questions may not come from the audience.

Another use for the question box is to collect ideas for future discussions.

V. Group discussion in isolated units

Commanding officers and orientation officers of small units in isolated locations will find group discussions a valuable off-duty activity that strongly appeals to their more intelligent men. Under certain conditions, effective group discussions can be



organized even in the absence of reference materials. The main conditions are these:

1. Presence within the command of one or more individuals (preferably enlisted personnel) who will make successful group leaders—men of intelligence who have qualities of leadership and believe in the possibilities of free discussion. Possibly there are former teachers, lawyers, public speakers, and other men of experience in directing discussions who will be glad to participate.

2. Evidence that a number of men in the command would like to discuss current affairs and problems that concern them. This evidence may consist of existing "bull sessions" of doubtful value to morale, informally expressed desires of which knowledge has come to responsible officers, or information deliberately gathered by informal questionnaire.

3. Presence of some men whose education and interests are such that they can be used as experts to give discussion group members background facts on subjects which it is desired to discuss.

In isolated units where books, pamphlets, and periodicals for reference are lacking but where the three essential conditions hold, the following procedure is recommended to officers who desire to organize discussion groups:

FIRST—Determine the subjects the men are already talking about or would like to discuss, as well as their general interest in discussion. To accomplish this make use of your personal knowledge of the men's interests, the knowledge possessed by other officers or noncommissioned officers, or an informal questionnaire.

SECOND—Search the command for possible discussion leaders among enlisted personnel. To accomplish this draw upon your own or others' acquaintance with individuals in your unit, and search the file of Soldier's Qualification Cards.

THIRD—Canvass the command for “experts” who will substitute for reference materials. To accomplish this, begin by noting the range of subjects the group may wish to talk about. From there, proceed through every possible personal contact to find men who have special knowledge of these subjects, but do not neglect to search the file of Qualification Cards. These cards contain a mass of information about men’s civilian training and special interests. Finally, interview selected men to find out whether they have the background knowledge you need for your purpose.

FOURTH—Your final step consists of selecting a subject and an expert for a first meeting, of finding convenient physical arrangements for the meeting, and of publicizing the new activity in such a way as to reach all personnel who may want to attend.

BUT REMEMBER—Your program will stand or fall on the quality of the leadership and the availability of either experts or adequate reference materials. Constructive discussions must have basic background information. They must also be conducted in accordance with relatively simple, common sense, and well-recognized principles which have been described in this manual.

VI. Checking the results

There are several methods of estimating whether the discussion program is getting results. From those that are listed here it is suggested that each leader select such as appear to offer him a practicable combination for checking the results of his own program.

1. Attendance: The regularity with which particular individuals attend the meetings and the growth in attendance are indications of success.

2. Attitudes: A record can be kept of any change in the attitudes of group members with respect to such points as:

- a. Tolerance of opposing opinion.
- b. Willingness to ask questions and express opinions.
- c. Skill in asking pertinent and important questions.
- d. Willingness to listen.
- e. Avoidance of personalities in remarks.
- f. Friendly interest in other group members.
- g. Desire to continue the discussion after the meeting.

3. Reading habits: Increased use of books and magazines in the library before and after the discussion may be taken as a sign of stirred interest, if the library provides pertinent material.

4. Group participation: It is possible to appoint someone to keep track of the proportion of available time taken up by the group members as distinguished from speaker or leader. The higher this proportion is, the more successful is the meeting. An increase in the number of individuals participating from meeting to meeting is a healthy sign.

5. Germane discussion: If the minutes show that the thread of discussion kept close to the announced subject, the discussion may be considered to have been well led. This is not to say, however, that very effective discussions may not develop from an important side issue of the planned subject.

6. Interest at close of discussion: If the group or audience has evidently not had enough when the leader closes the meeting, the meeting is an obvious success.

7. Post-discussion interest questionnaires: It is possible to develop a brief questionnaire to measure the success of discussion meetings. The questionnaire should fit local needs. It can contain such questions as:

- a. Was the meeting (subject) interesting?
☐ very ☐ moderately ☐ not at all.
- b. Will you come again? ☐ Yes ☐ No.
- c. Did the leader (speaker) talk
☐ too long ☐ just long enough ☐ too little?
- d. Did you take part in the discussion? ☐ Yes ☐ No.
- e. Suggest below what you would consider an interesting subject for
a coming meeting:

.....
.....

VII. Reference materials

A series of reference pamphlets for the use of discussion leaders is published by the War Department as numbered Education Manuals in the same format as this guide. Each of these pamphlets, except the present one, includes factual material about some question that may be of interest to personnel in the Army. Each contains specific suggestions to the leader as to how to handle the issue in a discussion meeting. The subject of each pamphlet has been chosen after an analysis of research studies made of the interests of Army personnel. The manuscript for each pamphlet is written in popular style and is prepared by an authority on the subject for the Historical Service Board of the American Historical Association. The general title for the series is *G. I. Roundtable*. New volumes of the series are to be published at frequent intervals. Orientation and education officers will receive a sample distribution of each as it comes out, together with instructions for requisitioning additional copies that may be desired.

Reference materials published by the War Department are restricted to those that comply with Title V of Public Law 277.

(See W. D. Bulletin No. 5, 1944 and W. D. Circular No. 128, 1944.) Before materials published by any private or public agency *including those listed below* are used for off-duty discussion, commanding officers should satisfy themselves that the materials comply with A.G.O. letter [A.G. 014.35 (28 Apr 44) WD-MB-M] dated 27 April 1944, subject: Restrictions in new "Federal Voting Law" on dissemination to members of the armed forces of political argument or political propaganda.

Magazines are a rich source of reference material for discussion. Because they are commonly available, among the more useful for this purpose are *The Readers' Digest*, *Newsweek*, *Time*, *Life*, and *Fortune*. The first four are included in the Unit Sets of Magazines distributed to oversea commands.

Reference pamphlets that will be useful to discussion leaders are distributed by a large number of publishers. They can readily be secured for groups within the continental United States. Some of the publishing organizations are given in the list below. The list is annotated with information about the character of pamphlets put out by each distributor, prices, and addresses from which pamphlets can be purchased out of library funds or other funds available to the leader.

List of Publishers

American Council, Institute of Pacific Relations, 129 East 52nd Street, New York, N. Y., publishes two series of pamphlets, one independently and the other in cooperation with the Webster Publishing Company. Subjects have to do with the Pacific Area. Typical are *Meet the Anzacs*; *Asia's Captive Colonies*; *China—America's Ally*; *Our Far Eastern Record*; *Modern Japan*; *Land of the Soviets*. List prices vary from 5 to 50 cents. On orders of over 25 copies discounts vary from 20 to 40 per cent depending upon the individual pamphlet and the number ordered.

Commission to Study the Organization of Peace, 8 West 40th

Street, New York, N. Y., publishes materials on postwar problems. Pamphlet, *Toward Greater Freedom*, is an excellent study guide to a variety of postwar problems. List price 15 cents.

Foreign Policy Association, 22 East 38th Street, New York, N. Y., publishes *Headline Books* and *Foreign Policy Reports*. Subjects deal with foreign nations and their social, economic, and political problems. Typical *Headline Books*: *America's Battlefronts*; *Russia at War*; *The Struggle for World Order*; *Look at Latin America*; *American Foreign Policy*; *East and West of Suez*. *Foreign Policy Reports* on current international problems are published on the 1st and 15th of each month. Prices (both series) 25 cents per copy. Discounts of 20 per cent on 10 to 99 copies and of 40 per cent on 100 to 499. Special discounts on unusually large orders.

National Planning Association, 800 21st Street, N. W., Washington, D. C., publishes materials on postwar problems in a series called *Planning Pamphlets*. Typical subjects: *Relief for Europe*; *Outlook for Domestic Air Transport*; *Outlook for the Railroad Industry*; *When Demobilization Day Comes*; *Post War Industrialization of China*. List price 25 cents. Discounts of 10 per cent on 10 to 50 copies, 15 per cent on 50 to 100, and 20 per cent on 100 or more.

Oxford University Press, 114 Fifth Avenue, New York, N. Y., publishes series called *America in a World at War*. Typical subjects: *An Atlas of the U.S.S.R.*; *Radio in Wartime*; *France and the War*; *Women in the War Production*; *German Geopolitics*. List price 10 cents. Discounts vary from 10 to 40 per cent.

Public Affairs Committee, 30 Rockefeller Plaza, New York, N. Y., publishes pamphlets on world and national affairs. Typical subjects: *Safeguarding Our Civil Liberties*; *Rebuilding Europe—After Victory*; *Freedom from Want*; *The Airplane and Tomorrow's World*. List price 10 cents. Discount of 20 per cent on orders for over 25 and under 100 copies; 25 per cent on quantities over 100; special discounts on orders over 500.

Twentieth Century Fund, 330 West 42nd Street, New York,

N. Y., publishes a useful study and discussion manual called *Wartime Facts and Post War Problems*, which contains a bibliography of over 200 titles. List price 50 cents.

H. W. Wilson Company, 950 University Avenue, New York, N. Y., publishes a series of books called *The Reference Shelf*. These books are collections of speeches, articles, and other original documents bearing upon such subjects as *Plans for a Post War World*, *Independence for India*, *Wage Stabilization and Inflation*, and *Federal Regulation of Labor Unions*. List price \$1.25 per copy. Discount 10 per cent.

Discussion Leadership Bibliography

- HOW TO LEAD GROUP DISCUSSION.** By LeRoy E. Bowman.
Published by the Woman's Press, 600 Lexington Avenue, New York, N. Y. (1942).
- DISCUSSION: PRINCIPLES AND TYPES.** By A. Craig Baird.
Published by McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 330 West 42nd Street, New York, N. Y. (1943).
- DISCUSSION METHODS FOR ADULT GROUPS.** By Thomas Fansler. Published by the American Association for Adult Education, 525 West 120th Street, New York, N. Y. (1934).
- DISCUSSION METHODS.** By Garland and Phillips. Volume 12, No. 2 of *The Reference Shelf*, published by H. W. Wilson Company, 950 University Avenue, New York, N. Y. (1940).

KEEP IT
LIVELY





BE TACTFUL AND FRIENDLY . . .

BE SINCERE AND KNOW YOUR STUFF.